

REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, the specification and claims 1, 3-6 and 8-12 have been amended. Claims 2 and 7 have been cancelled. Claim 13 has been added. No new matter has been added. Claims 1, 3-6 and 8-13 are pending and under consideration.

OBJECTION TO THE DRAWINGS

Applicants respectfully traverse the objection to the drawings because the “printing medium heating means” recited in Claim 9 are exemplary illustrated by the element labeled 9 PRINTING-MEDIUM-HEATING ROLLER in Fig. 9.

OBJECTION TO THE SPECIFICATION

Applicants have amended the originally filed specification to enhance the form.

OBJECTION TO CLAIM 1

Regarding the objection raised relative to the meaning of “opposite direction” feature recited in claim 1, in Fig. 1, item 3 (the intermediate transfer member) and item 7 (the carrier-agent-removing roller of reverse rotation) are indicated both as rotating in a counter-clockwise direction. Therefore, the outer surfaces of items 3 and 7 are moving in opposite directions at the contact point. The surfaces moving in opposite direction are illustrated in detail in Fig. 3B and described in paragraph [0042] of the originally filed Specification.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to specify “the carrier-agent-removing means having a surface in contact **at a contact region** with the carrier agent that floats due to an electric field force, and removing the carrier agent by moving the surface in a direction opposite a moving direction of the toner image **at the contact region**.” Applicants consider that the amendment removes any residual misunderstanding and therefore, respectfully requests withdrawal of the objection.

Claims 2 and 6 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claim 2 has been incorporated in the amended claim 1 (that is, claim 1 corresponds to the original claim 2 in independent form). In light of the amendments, claim 1 and claim 6 now depending on claim 1 (former claim 2) patentably distinguish over the cited prior art. The objection to claims 2 and 6 has been overcome.

CLAIM REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 7 has been cancelled, which renders moot the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112.

CLAIM REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102

In the Office Action, claims 1, 3-5, 8 and 10-12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,898,404 to Sakai et Al. (hereinafter "Sakai"). Claim 9 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent Application 2004/0175208 to Ichida et al. (hereinafter "Ichida").

As mentioned above, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the features of the original claim 2 that was not rejected in view of the cited prior art. Applicants respectfully submit that the amended claim 1 patentably defines over the cited prior art. Claims 3-6 and 8-12 are also patentable at least by inheriting patentability from the independent claim 1.

NEW CLAIM

New claim 13 is an alternative recitation of the invention as claimed in the amended claim 1. No new matter has been added. The new claim 13 being fully supported by the originally filed specification and claims. New claim 13 is patentable for the same reasons as the amended claim 1.

CONCLUSION

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date:

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By:

David M. Pitcher

David M. Pitcher

Registration No. 25,908

1201 New York Avenue, NW, 7th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501